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Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Wednesday, 13 November 1991, at 3 p.m.

President: Mr. SHIHABI (Saudi Arabia)

- Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba [142]

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The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 142

NECESSITY OF ENDING THE ECONOMIC, COMMERCIAL AND FINANCIAL EMBARGO IMPOSED BY THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA AGAINST CUBA (A/46/L.20)

The PRESIDENT (interpretation from Arabic): I call on the representative of Cuba, who will introduce draft resolution A/46/L.20, entitled "Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba", in the course of his statement.

Mr. ALARCON DE QUESADA (Cuba) (interpretation from Spanish): It will certainly come as no surprise to anyone if I begin my statement with a few thoughts on certain special circumstances with which some wish to surround this issue.

First, I should like to say that it has not been, and is not now, our intention to submit to the Assembly a bilateral dispute - even if, of course, more than one such dispute is included in the Assembly's agenda. Moreover, it is far from our intention to lead the Assembly into intervening in any way in issues that are exclusively within the sovereignty of any State. We would not have the audacity to tax members' attention unnecessarily with an undeserving issue.

The item we are now considering is of vital importance for my people. It is related directly, no more and no less, to the right to life, to the survival of an entire nation. Moreover, it is a problem that, also directly, affects the purposes and principles enshrined in the Charter, impedes the normal development of international relations and seriously jeopardizes the legitimate interests of many States, institutions and persons throughout the

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world. Everyone in this Hall knows this, as do millions of people outside this Hall.

Everyone here is also aware of the cause of the very peculiar situation confronting the Assembly in dealing with this issue. That cause has been repeatedly spelled out, both here and in world capitals, orally and in writing, in language so crude that it cannot have escaped anyone's notice. I have here a whole collection of various communications that the Government of the United States has disseminated, through the ministries for foreign affairs of many countries - communications in which the most fallacious arguments are put forward in tandem with the most transparent threats. They all bear a clear message: Washington has the intention not only of persisting in its illegal and criminal blockade against Cuba, but also of blocking discussion on this issue in the General Assembly.

In those documents and in the statement made by the Department of State on 21 August, it is alleged that there is no blockade but simply an embargo. However, any reader will be surprised to find this assertion:

"A blockade implies that the United States is taking action to prevent other countries from trading with Cuba. That is clearly not the case."

In document A/46/193/Add.7 of 12 September 1991, we demonstrate that the blockade is precisely that - a world-wide blockade being imposed by the Government of the United States, extending its anti-Cuban laws and regulations beyond its territory. In that document, which was transmitted to delegations two months ago, we include specific quotations from a number of United States provisions that have been in force for years and that demonstrate the

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extraterritorial extension of Washington's jurisdiction. Sixty days have passed since document A/46/193/Add.7 was distributed, and no one has yet questioned the accuracy of the information it contains. Of course, anyone who wishes to will have an opportunity of doing so during the debate on this item.

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The document is simply a compilation taken from the Code of Federal Regulations of the United States. Allow me now to give you some examples showing how the extraterritorial implementation of those provisions seriously damages Cuba but also affects the interests of third countries and is a constant source of international conflicts.

In a number of recent cases, legitimate commercial operations agreed upon with non-United States enterprises, which are therefore not under the jurisdiction of the United States, could not be carried out owing to express prohibitions from Washington. Official entities of the third countries involved participated in some of those operations. I also have here the relevant documents pertaining to each case. I shall limit myself to mentioning the items whose export to Cuba was prohibited: eye drops, tires, hydraulic components, "V" transmission belts, kitchen kits for aircraft, electrical controls and regulators, materials for electrical installations, electrical accessories, heater components, wood-cutting tools, metal-cutting tools, iron connectors for electrical installations, light-bulbs, electrical fuses, equipment for commercial kitchens, electric switches, shipping-related products, plastic resins, cellophane paper, water-treatment resins, tape for the production of telephone cables, glue for motor couplings, filters, medical books and soft drinks. As you can see, none of these are "strategic materials". To avoid abusing your patience, I shall briefly mention only a few of the cases.

The Spanish publishing house Editorial Interamericana S.A. had for years been an important supplier of medical books to Cuba until it was acquired in 1989 by McGraw-Hill, a United States firm, which forbade its Spanish subsidiary to sell anything to our country and even to participate in Cuba's Book Fair. That transatlantic imposition of decisions taken in Washington

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makes Cubans' access to medical literature more difficult, but it also leaves a number of Spanish workers jobless.

On instructions from its parent company in the United States, Pepsi-Cola Montreal decided in mid-May of this year not to abide by a contract it had signed for the sale of 28,000 cases of soft drinks to Cuba. The political implications of that act were quite properly noted by the Canadian authorities. In a communication to the aforementioned company, Mr. R. H. Davidson, Director General for Latin America and the Caribbean of the Canadian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, stated:

(spoke in English)

"Canadian Government trade policy, which we would expect to be supported by companies incorporated in Canada, favours trade in non-strategic goods with Cuba. The Canadian Government has also consistently opposed the extraterritorial application of United States trade policy towards Cuba, either directly by the United States Government or through United States parent corporations, since the adoption of the United States Cuban Assets Control Regulations in 1963."

(spoke in Spanish)

Cuba and the Swedish company Alfa-Laval have had traditional trade links. However, in May of this year, that corporation cancelled a sales contract it had signed with MEDICUBA. That operation concerned Swedish equipment, manufactured in Sweden by Alfa-Laval, that Cuba had been purchasing for years until the inquisitors in Washington found that a single part of that equipment, a filtering membrane, was of United States origin.

In document A/46/193/Add.7 we list a number of commercial operations for the purchase of medical and laboratory equipment and spare parts manufactured outside the United States by non-United States companies, which could not be

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carried out because of prohibitions by the United States Department of the Treasury.

I do not intend to read this other document I am showing, but the least I can do is mention it in this Hall, where the World Summit for Children was held scarcely a year ago. Do you remember the promises made on that occasion to the children of the world? Did anybody say at that time that Cuban children were excluded from those promises? This document contains a list of spare parts, some of them very small and not very expensive. They are not "strategic" in nature and serve no military purpose. Their only use is in children's hospitals, but they are not toys; they are indispensable parts of equipment for the treatment of children with heart disease. Those little parts have only one defect: they are of United States origin. I am certain that all United States Embassies also have a copy of this list, and that explains the increasing difficulties we are encountering almost everywhere in the world in purchasing those products. Some of our colleagues have stated that the item now being considered by the General Assembly is very sensitive. Can anyone doubt it? Among other things, it tests everyone's sensitivity with regard to children's right to life.

Cuban children have other experiences with the blockade. In 1981 an epidemic of hemorrhagic dengue fever broke out in Cuba, in circumstances which give reason to suspect that it was introduced from abroad. The United States authorities interfered with our efforts at that time to obtain the product needed to eliminate the vector of that epidemic; notwithstanding the representations made to Washington by the World Health Organization (WHO), we were able to obtain that product only after considerable efforts and at great cost, in a distant market. More than 100 children paid with their lives for that episode of abominable cruelty.

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In its efforts aimed at illegally imposing its blockade policy in other countries beyond its jurisdiction, Washington has applied various forms of pressure and interference. Early in 1983 the Department of State received a note from the Canadian Ministry of Foreign Affairs stating inter alia:

(spoke in English)

"We cannot accept ... that United States officials take steps in Canada in support of the application of United States law to inhibit Canadian firms from pursuing express Canadian Government policies of promoting trade with Cuba in non-strategic goods ... If they are indeed long-standing United States practice, they should be discontinued."

(spoke in Spanish)

Those interventionist activities are being extended to all countries and have proliferated in recent months. There has been abundant testimony to that fact in the press, especially in Latin America.

The savage persecution of Cuban nickel exports deserves special mention. In that real war, which has lasted over thirty years, against one of the main products of a poor and underdeveloped country, the Government of the United States has succeeded in achieving its main goals, and has closed off our traditional markets one after another. This has even led to the cancellation of contracts which had been duly signed and were in fact being carried out by private and public corporations of the largest consumers of that mineral. To achieve its purpose, the United States has used every method, from an embargo on stainless-steel shipments suspected of containing Cuban nickel, through the imposition of very severe control mechanisms on the nickel-consuming countries and the requirement of guarantees that no product exported to the United

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States contained Cuban nickel, to the threats made and the extortion practised by United States diplomats visiting the nickel-consuming companies in a number of countries one by one.

Now Washington is also requiring those exporting sugar to the United States to guarantee that the shipments they wish to sell contain no Cuban sugar.

Another example of extraterritoriality is the United States attempt to proscribe completely the use of the dollar in any transaction involving Cuba, even when it has no connection whatsoever with persons or entities in the United States. Washington is thus interfering with the functioning of the banks and financial institutions of other countries and is restricting their activities even though those activities have nothing at all to do with the United States.

What I have just been describing is the result of the extraterritorial application of the anti-Cuban blockade provisions now in force. Obviously, that policy violates the San Francisco Charter, the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) and a number of resolutions of the General Assembly; it runs counter to international law; not only does it constitute a criminal act of aggression against Cuba, but its application in practice is a constant source of international conflicts; it also disregards the most basic rights of the Cuban people and harms the legitimate interests of others.

Everything I have said relates to what has existed up to now. But, as if that were not enough, since last year the Congress of the United States has been considering legislative proposals designed to intensify and extend that country's economic, commercial and financial blockade against Cuba, with

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severe threats and reprisals against those trading with our country. Some of those proposals have already been incorporated into legislation which is awaiting executive approval. Their aim is to eliminate totally any trade with Cuba by subsidiaries of United States corporations which are situated in and are under the jurisdiction of third countries. Almost all Cuban imports that would thus be prohibited are foodstuffs and medicines, as is recognized in this report prepared by the office of the United States Government that has been entrusted with implementing the blockade. To achieve that aim, the United States would illegally and arbitrarily increase even further the extension of its laws to territories beyond its jurisdiction and would violate the sovereignty of other countries.

For that reason the Embassy of Ireland in Washington, on behalf of the States members of the European Community, last year presented a note to the Department of State, objecting to the proposed legislation.

One of its paragraphs reads:

(spoke in English)

> "The Community is still of the view that the United States has no basis in international law to claim the right to license non-United States transactions with Cuba by companies incorporated outside the United States of America, whatever their ownership or control."

(spoke in Spanish)

We also recognize the value of the statement made last September by the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry of the United Kingdom, which I shall take the liberty of quoting:

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(spoke in English)

"It is for the British Government, not the United States Congress, to determine the United Kingdom's policy on trade with Cuba. We will not accept any attempt to superimpose United States law on United Kingdom companies. I hope that the Congress will think long and hard before seeking to interfere with legitimate civil trade between this country and Cuba."

(spoke in Spanish)

I have put before you a set of specific data, all of them supported by incontestable documents and evidence, clearly showing how the Government of the United States is carrying out an illegal economic, commercial and financial blockade against Cuba. I have quoted official statements made by Governments friendly to and allied with the United States demonstrating that the actions and measures constituting that blockade are contrary to international law and affect not only Cuba but other countries as well. In so doing, it has not been my intention to offend anyone, least of all those Governments for which my own Government feels proper respect and consideration. I hope they will understand that it was my obligation to demonstrate the total falsehood of the United States allegations that this item concerns merely a bilateral dispute between our two countries and also to refute the extraordinary absurdity of those who view the discussion of this issue as interference in the internal affairs of the United States.

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I think no one can have the slightest doubt that that blockade is an international problem and that its consideration by the General Assembly is entirely legitimate. Moreover, this Assembly has the inescapable moral and and political obligation to help put an immediate end to a policy which, besides being illegal, causes serious harm to an entire people. To that end, we have presented the draft resolution contained in document A/46/L.20. In drafting it, we have taken into account comments and suggestions which a number of delegations, whose interest and spirit of cooperation we deeply appreciate, were kind enough to make.

It should go without saying that our intention in proposing this draft resolution is not to put delegations in an uncomfortable positior. But - to put it in the simplest of terms - it is our duty to demand justice for Cuba and for its people and to seek the solidarity necessary to achieve it, and we will carry out that duty in this Assembly and in other international forums.

In any case, we all know the exact nature of the obstacles keeping this Assembly from taking a just decision on this issue. It has nothing to do with legal interpretations or semantic disquisitions.

The true "argument", the only "argument" of the Government of the United States, is in this paper, with which many of you are already acquainted. I have a number of copies obtained from different capitals. Allow me to read the paragraph that contains the only true United States "argument":

(spoke in English)

"In view of your relations with them, we would appreciate your going to the Cubans in an effort to have the resolution withdrawn. The Cubans should understand that their insistence that you support them threatens your good relationship with the United States. The American Congress and people will be watching this important issue very carefully."

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(spoke in Spanish)

We know to how many places on this planet this clear and direct threat, showing Washington's total lack of respect for the dignity and sovereignty of other nations, has been conveyed. We know what certain special envoys have said in a number of capitals. We know of the gross impertinence they have displayed in a number of meetings, even with Heads of State of independent republics, which those envoys attempt to treat as if they were colonial possessions. We also know that in more than one case, the threatening language has been compounded by the suspension of credits, by the interruption of bilateral projects and by other measures of pressure and reprisal. Concerning all of this, we also have documentary evidence, which we prefer to keep to ourselves for the time being.

But what more do we need?

(spoke in English)

> "The Cubans should understand that their insistence that you support them threatens your good relationship with the United States. The American Congress and people will be watching this important issue very carefully."

(spoke in Spanish)

In its determination to prevent the international community from taking the necessary action, the Government of the United States has launched a frantic and inordinate campaign of intimidation, threats and pressure. Under such circumstances it would be very difficult for the General Assembly to exercise its responsibilities fully and to analyse objectively the draft resolution before it, and it would be very difficult for each Member to assume the most appropriate position in complete freedom and without fear of reprisal.

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Cuba firmly believes in international solidarity. It claims it for its people because today that people needs it. But even in these times fraught with risks for our country, that same sense of solidarity compels us to understand the difficulties with which others attempting to maintain a dignified position on this item would be unfairly confronted.

Accordingly, I wish to declare officially my delegation's decision that it will not press for a vote during the present session of the General Assembly on the draft resolution contained in document A/46/L.20 and that action on it should be postponed until the next session.

Many Governments, institutions and individuals world-wide have called for an end to the economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed upon Cuba. We have faith in their solidarity. We trust that their efforts will be multiplied and become even more powerful, helping to create appropriate conditions that would allow the General Assemby to take a just decision next year.

I cannot conclude my statement without clarifying an issue about which confusion has been sown. Attempts have been made to explain the blockade as a result of the cold war and of the confrontation that prevailed between the two formerly antagonistic blocs.

But the historical facts can very easily be found. A reading of the autobiographies of former Presidents Eisenhower and Nixon is enough to show that as early as the first few weeks after the triumph of the Cuban Revolution, the Government of the United States began its hostility towards my country. The adoption of the Agrarian Reform Act on 17 May 1959 was met by Washington's stubborn and inadmissible opposition, embodied in the implementation of the first acts of the economic warfare that it still wages

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against Cuba. That happened many months before Cuba's adoption of its first socialist-oriented measures and even before our re-establishment of relations with the Soviet Union.

Any secondary-school student knows the true motivations of the United States regarding Cuba.

In 1808, 10 years before the birth of Karl Marx, the United States tried to obtain from Spain the sale of what was then the latter's Cuban colony.

In 1823, 25 years before the first publication of the Communist Manifesto, the United States invented the so-called ripe-fruit theory, according to which Cuba, when separated from Spain, would necessarily be incorporated into North America.

In 1898, five years before the founding of the Bolshevik Party, the United States intervened in our war for independence, frustrating it and imposing upon us four years of military rule.

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In 1901, 16 years before the triumph of the October Socialist Revolution in Russia, the United States, while occupying the island militarily, imposed an amendment to the Cuban Constitution through which it stripped Cuba of part of its territory - which it is still usurping in Guantanamo - and arrogated to itself the right to intervene in Cuba.

Several decades before the start of the so-called cold war, the United States again, on more than one occasion, sent in its troops of occupation, deposing and installing Governments and intervening in various ways in Cuba's internal affairs until it won its full and definitive independence on 1 January 1959.

The Cubans did not import their Revolution from anywhere. It was the fruit of more than a century of struggle.

Those who in the nineteenth century began our people's long struggle for independence had to do so in much more difficult circumstances. They chose the flag with a lone star as the highest symbol of the nation they wanted to found. That star stood for the solitude of a small country that had to fight alone against colonialism, without allies, on a small island, for 30 years. But it also stood for the indomitable will of a people that would never give up, would never renounce its independence, would never betray its principles.

Let there be no doubt. The Cubans today raise the same flag and they will know how to defend it with the same firmness and passion as their forefathers. By resisting and defending the Revolution, we Cubans defend not only the just, dignified society that, in spite of great adversity, we will continue to build; we defend not only our society without beggars and without illiteracy, where no one is forsaken, our society with schools and hospitals

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and justice and dignity for all: we also defend our motherland - finally and definitively free, the motherland that no one, ever, will be able to take away from us.

The PRESIDENT (interpretation from Arabic): The representative of Cuba proposed in his statement that the Assembly defer action on draft resolution A/46/L.20 to the forty-seventh session of the General Assembly. This proposal would entail the inscription of the item on the provisional agenda of the forty-seventh session of the General Assembly and the carrying over of the draft resolution to that session.

May I therefore take it that the Assembly decides to defer further consideration of this item to the forty-seventh session of the General Assembly, to inscribe this item on the provisional agenda of the forty-seventh session of the General Assembly and to carry over the draft resolution to which I have just referred?

It was so decided.

The PRESIDENT (interpretation from Arabic): We have thus concluded our consideration of agenda item 142.

The meeting rose at 3.55 p.m.